

Message Text

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ACTION AGR-08

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 EB-07 USIA-06 COME-00 AID-05

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /040 W
----- 085703

R 080707Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6107

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PASS: AGRICULTURE FOR MEEKER & ANDERSON, FAS/W AND USIA

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAGR, ETRD, EGEN, AS

SUBJ: MEAT BOARD MOVES TO SLOW BEEF EXPORTS TO U.S.

1. IN A MOVE TO SLOW DOWN BEEF EXPORTS TO U.S. AND HOLD TO THE 280,000 MT RESTRAINT LEVEL, THE MEAT BOARD ANNOUNCED SOME NEW CONTROL MEASURES WHICH WILL AFFECT FUTURE SHIPMENTS. EXPORTERS HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT AS OF JUNE 30, 40 PCT OF THEIR ENTITLEMENT CREDITS FOR THE U.S. MARKET, UNDR THE 2 TO 1 DIVERSIFICATION SCHEME, ARE NOW FROZEN. THE BORD IS PREPARED TO RELEASE THESE CREDITS BUT ONLY IN THE EVENT THAT THE AUSTRALIAN QUOTA IS NOT FILLED, OR SHOULD A SHORTFALL FROM OTHER COUNTRIES OCCUR ON THE U.S. MARKET DURING 1975. FROZEN CREDITS NOT USED WILL BE CARRIED FORWARD TO NEXT YEAR. THE ACTION WAS TAKEN TO MAKE SURE THAT THE FLOW OF BEEF WOULD BE SPREAD MORE UNIFORMLY OVER THE BALANCE OF THE SHIPPING YEAR.

2. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEAT BOARD INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT HE PLANS TO LEAVE SOON FOR THE U.S. TO DISCUSS THE WHOLE MEAT ISSUE. HE SIAD HIS MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO MAKE SURE AUSTRALIA GETS ITS FULL SHARE OF ANY SHORTFALL WHICH MAY OCCUR FROM OTHER COUNTRIES DURING CURRENT SHIPPING YEAR. HE SAID HE WAS CERTAIN THERE WOULD BE SOME SHORTFALL,
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MAINLY FROM MEXICO AND IRELAND.

3. AN URGENT INDUSTRY-WIDE MEETING WAS CALLED IN SYDNEY ON JULY 7 TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT DESPERATE SITUATION IN THE AUSTRALIAN BEEF INDUSTRY. A COMMITTEE WAS APPOINTED TO FORMULATE NEW PLANS TO PRESENT TO THE GOVERNMENT TO HELP SAVE THE BEEF INDUSTRY FROM WHAT THEY SAY COULD BE NEAR TOTAL COLLAPSE. WITH SHIPMENTS TO THE U.S. NOW DOWN TO A TRICKLE FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR AND THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED JAPANESE QUOTA REPORTEDLY BOUGHT AND IN BOND WAITING SHIPMENT BY THE END OF AUGUST, THE OUTLOOK FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR IS INDEED BLEAK. SEVERAL EXPORT MEAT WORKS REPORTED AT THE MEETING THAT UNLESS SOMETHING IS DONE SOON, THEY WOULD BE FORCED TO CLOSE BY THE END OF AUGUST.

4. COL. M. MCARTHUR, WHO HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO SEEK GOVERNMENT AID TO DATE, SAID AFTER THE MEETING THAT IT WAS NO LONGER A MATTER OF REQUESTING SUCH SIMPLE MEASURES AS SUSPENSION OF EXPORT CHARGES AND MINOR TAX RELIEF, BUT THAT OF NEEDING MILLIONS IN GOVERNMENT GRANTS TO SAVE THE MEAT INDUSTRY. HE SAID THE SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED TO A MASSIVE WELFARE PROBLEM AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE PREPARED TO TAKE A NEW AND BOLD APPROACH IN THE FORM OF EITHER DIRECT CASH GRANTS OR FREIGHT SUBSIDIES. HE SAID THAT BOTH N.Z. AND THE EEC ARE USING EXPORT SUBSIDIES, AND TO BE COMPETITIVE, AUSTRALIA MAY BE FORCED TO DO THE SAME.

5. COMMENT:
THE COMMITTEE IS TO PRESENT ITS PROPOSALS TO THE GOVERNMENT BY JULY 11, WITH THE HUGE DEFICIT THE GOVERNMENT IS ALREADY FACING, IT IS DOUBTFUL IF VERY MUCH AID WILL BE FORTHCOMING AT THIS TIME EVEN THOUGH THE SITUATION IS DESPERATE AND THAT THERE COULD BE HEAVY UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE MEAT INDUSTRY.
GREEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EXPORT CONTROLS, MEATS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ellisoob
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975CANBER04437
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750234-1213
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750774/aaaacoaf.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AGR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ellisoob
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 JUL 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <13 NOV 2003 by ellisoob>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEAT BOARD MOVES TO SLOW BEEF EXPORTS TO U.S.
TAGS: EAGR, ETRD, EGEN, AS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006